

A

REVIEW

OF THE

STATE

OF THE

BRITISH NATION.

Tuesday, April 24. 1711.

I Have been charg'd since my last *Review* upon Trade, with justifying, as the *Complainer* calls it, the Encroachments of the *Dutch* upon our Trade, whether *African* Trade or other — And the Author offers to me a Question — Why we should not reflect upon the *Dutch* Encroachments on our *Fishing* Trade, which, *says he*, They have no Right to — And we ought to beat them out of it?

I find the Author of this Quarrelling Letter, Audies so draw me into an Enquiry about our *Fishing* Trade, and I am content, as far as I have leisure, to talk of it here — But I shall confine my self to the Point, as

it will lie before us in Matter of Right and Wrong, I mean the Title to the Trade; and there it will keep pace with the *African* Trade, the Right to which is so much Debated, and which is a Subject I have been upon some Time — I have, for a long Time, resolv'd to enter into the *Fishing* Trade, as a proper Subject for this Paper, especially as it relates to *Scotland* and *Holland*, but the Time for that is not yet — But to speak to the Point of Right and Wrong, in Trade, I shall join the *African* and the *Fishing* Trade together.

The *Scots* had formerly the whole *Herring* Fishery; the *Dutch* and *Danish*, as they

they are call'd, came upon the Coast, and bought the Herrings upon the *High-Sea* of the *Scots* Fishermen, just as we go to *Newfoundland*, and buy Cod-fish of the Bankers or Fishermen, who Cure them there — To this Day, I believe, the Trade had remain'd to the *Scots*, had not their own Folly Loaded the Trade with such an Inconvenience, as made it intolerable to the *Dutch* — This was forbidding the Fishermen to sell their Fish at Sea, but obliging them to bring them all on Shoar, and to sell them in the Market — This spoil'd the Fish, and render'd them useless to the *Dutch*, and so drove them to the Necessity of fitting out *Busses*, or Fishing-Vessels, to go a Fishing in for themselves.

They lay this Folly to the Charge of the *Royal Burghs*, or Corporation-Towns in *Scotland*, who, at the Convention of the Burghs, Commanded that no Foreigner should buy any Fish till the Burgesses were serv'd — As much an Enemy as I am to Corporation Tyranny, I will not affirm they could be so simply Proud, to make that the Reason; but certain it is, they made a Law, and it is yet to be seen, that the Fishermen should sell no Fish but on Shoar — And this rendering the Fish *Stale*, and unfit for Curing, the *Dutch* could by no means buy them, and by Consequence, were driven by Force, to catch them for themselves, and this lost the Trade to *Scotland* — And who can blame the *Dutch* for this?

The same thing may be alluded to, in *Africa* — If you will throw away that Trade, as the *Scots* did their Herring Fishing — If you will not let your Company, that would preserve it, carry on the Trade, but throw it open to all the World — If the Planters go to the *Dutch* for *Negroes*, your Trade not being able to supply them — You cannot blame the *Dutch* — But that by the by.

To return to the Herring-Trade; when ever we have thought fit to Quarrel with the *Dutch*, this is trump'd up upon them, as one Clause; and the great Crime the *Dutch* are Guilty of, is, That they Fish on

our Coast — Or to put it in our State Language, They Fish in our SEAS; a Pre-
tence about as Honourable, as our Attempt upon their *Smyrna* Fleet in Days of yore, was, whose only Offence was, That they Sail'd through the Channel, or in *English*, that they came where we thought we might catch them — Tho' we fail'd in that too.

I must confess, I never yet saw that Point determin'd, how far any Man, or Nation, could claim a Right to this or that part of the Sea, exclusive of another; nor by what Authority that Word OUR SEAS, was taken up: The World, God in his Providence determin'd for the Use of Man, and he gave him *Livery* and *Seisin* of its whole Extent, as his Property, as soon as he made him — *Genesis* 1. 28. *Be Fruitful and Multiply, and Replenish the Earth, and Subdue it*, that is, possess it: But we find no Possession given him of the Sea, so as to call it his Property — God Almighty seems to have given him the Earth as his own Possession; but the Sea reserv'd in general, seem'd to be the great Common, not to be parted or divided; not to be possess'd or subdu'd, but for the general Use of all the Tenants of that great Farm, the Earth; which God, the great Lord of the Manour, reserv'd in his own Royalty, giving the *Herbage*, viz. *The Fish*, for their Use in common, but keeping the Property in himself — And the Distinction is plain — He had him Subdue the Earth, that is, he gave him the Power and Property there — But the Words follow, *And have Dominion over the Fishes of the Sea* — He gave him no Property of the Sea itself, only a Dominion over the Fish, that is, just as the Tenants of the Manour feeds in common upon the waste, but the Right is reserv'd to the Lord of the Royalty.

The Sea seems to me to be the great Common of all the Creation; all have a Right to Range in it, none have an Exclusive Property to any part of it; the Fish were given to Man in general, and every Man in the World has an equal Property to them — Nor can any real Title be brought to any part of the Ocean, by any Man,

Man, or any Nation of Men in the World.

Upon this Foot, I do not see how we can Quarrel with the *Dutch*, for Fishing on OUR SEAS, as we call them — The Sea is theirs as well as ours, and the Fish in the Sea given in common to them, and to us, and to any Nation in the World, that can come to catch them — And I should be glad to see all our Pretenders to the Right of Fishing, come and shew us the Bounds of their Property, and draw the Lines of their Dominion: God, for their Mortification, has wip'd out the Marks of their Pretensions, by suffering the Liquid World to receive no Impression, or wear any Badge of its Submission to Humane appointment.

From hence we might argue very much in parity of Reasoning, to our Planting Colonies in wild and remote Countries; What Title, What Claim do we make to our Colonies Abroad, either in *Virginia*, the Islands, *Africa*, and the Gold Coast, or any where else? At least, What, that we should pretend to prohibit others settling there also? And therefore I think, the *Scots* Settlement at *Darien*, had no just pretence against it from the *Spaniards*, but it was the Property of the *Scots* as much as of the *Spaniards*.

The *African* Company have settled Colonies, and built Forts and Castles, on the Coast of *Africa*; here they have a Settled Property, how they came by it, is not the Question — The *Dutch* come and Build by them, so far I believe Property is on an equal Foot; but if the *Dutch* come to take it from them, that would be Robbery and unjust — Here comes a Parcel of People, and they say *No*, but you shall Trade thither no longer; We will have your Forts and Castles from you, or the Government shall have them; We will give you what we please for them — Not at all regarding either what they Cost the Proprietors, or whether they are willing to part with them.

Now what shall we call this? Is it not Robbery and Theft? — No, say they, for we will do it by Law; the more the

Theft still, say I, because cover'd and colour'd over with the Pretence of Law —

It is true, that in many Cases, Acts of Parliament are made to oblige People to part with Land, Houses, &c. upon Publick Occasions; such as cutting Rivers, Dreins, Navigation, and the like; and then always to prevent Injury, the Value is refer'd to proper Judges, to see that the Owner had no Injury — But was ever a Law made to take away a Man's House to give to another, only because that other had a Mind to live in it? This is a piece of Justice peculiar to our Separate Traders.

Now suppose the Company says, *We will not Sell our Forts and Castles*, Will any Parliament take them away from them, and give them to these Separate Men? Or we will not sell them under such and such a Price — Will any Parliament say you shall sell them without any such Price? — This a Parliament may do, because they can do any Thing — But by no other Rule can they do it than by the same, with which they may take away a Man's Wife, and give her to another.

Indeed I do not think, literally speaking, that any Parliament could legally prevent the Company selling their Settlements to the *Dutch*, if the Separate Traders obtain'd the Ruining their Trade, and yet refus'd to give a Price for them; nor do I think they could be punish'd for it by any Law now in being, if they should sell them to the *Dutch*; since they are their meer Property, purchas'd with their Money, and no Way under the Government of the Publick at all.

But what need we Debate this Point? That the *Dutch* will have them all, if the Company is suffer'd thus to Languish, and should be at last, forc'd to abandon them, is out of doubt — And I cannot but think it is worth the while of the present Parliament, to Enquire into one Question that was never ask'd yet, and that is this; *Is there not an Absolute Necessity of determining this great Debate this very Session? And will not the Trade be entirely lost without Recovery to this Nation, if it be not*, Either to the *Dutch* or to some-body else?

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The Company is upon the Wheel, Languishing and Disjointed; either set them free, and deliver them from the Torture of their constant Evil Genius, the *Separate Traders*, who haunt and weary them to Death, or give them the *Coup de Grace*, and put them out of their Pain — But let who will be the Means of putting an End to it, let them take this with them as they go; Whenever they lay open the Trade, they give it away, and the Children of those Men that push them upon it, will Curse the Memory of it — The Reason is plain, *Separate Traders* can never carry it on, can never Support it, nor can they give any Security to the Nation, that they will do it — This is the true Reason, why they would fain persuade us, that it is *Ridiculous to ask Security*; indeed it is *Ridiculous to ask it of them*, the *Separate Traders*, because 'tis *Ridiculous to ask Men for that which is not in their Power to give*; but I am very sure this Nation will look the most Wildly and Ridiculously to Settle it without Security, that ever they look'd in any National Thing they ever did — And it favours of strange Assurance, to pretend to such a Trust without a suitable Security.

Security is the Word — When the *Separate Traders* can give it, no doubt the Parliament will hear them; but till they can find Security, or a Parliament that will throw away the Nation's Interest, and take no Pains to secure their Advantages to Posterity, till that, I say — The *African Trade* can never be laid open and in com-

mon, nor be in any other manner carried on, than in an *Exclusive Company* —

What *Ridiculous* and *abhorr'd Things* are every Day offer'd in Print, against this great and main Article of Security, by the *Advocates for an open Trade*; I touch'd at a little in my last, on this Subject; indeed the Company needs no better *Advocates*, than those *Gentlemen themselves*, for nothing can serve any Cause more, than to have those that defend it, do it by such *Aburdities*, as must make the World laugh at them — And it needs nothing more to confirm this Article, than to hear them ask, What Security the Duties on Trade, which are the Funds laid to borrow Money on for the Publick, have, that they shall be sufficient? — When every Body knows, and the last *Lottery* is a Witness of it, that 1. There is always an overplus thrown in, to provide for Deficiency —

That in the first Place supposes it will come — 2. The Honour and Faith of Parliament is Engag'd to make good such Deficiency, and without these, no Man in his Wits would lend a Farthing upon the best Parliament Fund that ever was laid: Yet our wise Traders, as if their Trade with all its Uncertainties, could never fall short, pretend that it is Nonsense to ask them for any Security — I wonder whether any of them will have the Assurance to start this Argument when they come to the House of Commons, and whether, if they do, they come prepared to be laugh'd at?

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